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REPORTS TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Draft report

UNDP report

1. The Administrator introduced his report to the Economic and Social Council (DP/1999/10). He noted that the report had been prepared in compliance with General Assembly resolutions 53/192, 50/120, and 47/199, as well as Economic and Social Council resolutions 1994/33 and 1998/27. UNDP had taken special care in preparing the report to address the new standards and requirements that the Executive Board had set in 1998, in particular those calling for a more analytical report indicating lessons learned and problems. In addition, the report included recommendations for action by the Economic and Social Council. An approach and format that was common to UNFPA, the United Nations Children's Fund, and the World Food Programme, had been utilized, while allowing for each fund to highlight aspects that were particularly relevant to its areas of operation.

2. The Administrator reviewed the highlights of the report and then made brief remarks relating to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the World Bank's Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF).

3. With regard to UNDAF, the challenge would be twofold, he explained, to ensure a strategic and holistic framework. UNDAF was designed to bring greater coherence, collaboration, and effectiveness to the United Nations development efforts at the country level. The synthesis of agreements reached at the United Nations summits and conferences in the 1990s had laid the basis for a strong, legitimate vision of support to programme countries through UNDAF. All United Nations organizations had important roles to play in a team effort. A periodic update on the progress in pursuing United Nations reform proposals, prepared by

the United Nations Development Group Office, was made available to the Executive Board.

4. The Administrator noted that with regard to the CDF, the approach based on country ownership should be distinguished from models that sought to weld the international community together into one unified monolithic force, which was not a healthy prospect; CDF should not be such an instrument. Experience had shown that the United Nations development effort, in its independent thinking, non-conditionality and country ownership, was very valuable. Development cooperation agencies should offer options to programme countries, and those countries could have legitimate concerns regarding the emergence of a tight coalition of all external partners.

5. The Administrator underlined that the purpose of the CDF should not be confused with that of UNDAF. The CDF should not be seen as superseding UNDAF, as the latter was designed to bring greater coherence, collaboration, and effectiveness to the United Nations development effort at the country level.

6. Work on the country cooperation assessments (CCAs) and UNDAFs would continue as planned. The CCA/UNDAF process, which had been endorsed by the General Assembly, was designed to strengthen both the strategic value and coherence of United Nations development cooperation. The process should provide a solid foundation for United Nations country teams to engage in a dialogue with national partners and the World Bank on the CDF. Likewise, Governments could continue to encourage the World Bank to contribute to, and participate in, the CCA/UNDAF guidelines to be issued shortly. Finally, it was for Member States to decide what programming tools they wished to utilize and the role that they wanted the international community to play.

7. The Administrator briefed the Executive Board on the outcome of the first session of 1999 of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), which had included the approval of a guidance note prepared in the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) on the CCA/UNDAF process. The guidance note encouraged the enhanced involvement of specialized agencies in the process, including through their governing bodies.

Discussion

8. Many delegations took the floor to congratulate UNDP on its report, which they described as analytical, problem-oriented and very useful, in particular through its recommendations, to the discussions at the Economic and Social Council. The report fulfilled the provisions of General Assembly, Economic and Social Council and Executive Board legislation, and could serve as a model for reporting to the Council by funds and programmes. The recommendations could be the subject of an informal discussion at the Council.

9. United Nations Development Assistance Framework. Many speakers addressed the role of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and UNDAF in furthering United Nations reform in the operational activities area, expressing strong support for the CCA/UNDAF process. Continued collaboration at the inter-agency level was strongly emphasized, with speakers underlining the need for specialized agencies to participate in the UNDAF process. The recent decision

by ACC in that regard was welcomed. The need for UNDAF to meet the needs of programme countries and reflect their priorities was emphasized by many delegations, as was the need to ensure that UNDAF developed into a strategic document. With regard to the recommendations on UNDAF contained in paragraph 33 (b), several speakers questioned the wording regarding coordination, stating that it should refer to coordination "with" other donors, and not "of" other donors. Some speakers expressed the hope that UNDG would coordinate increasingly with the other sectoral reform groups created by the Secretary-General. Other delegations underlined the need to involve civil society, including non-governmental organizations, in the UNDAF process. More information on the outcome of the evaluation of the pilot UNDAFs would be welcomed.

10. Resident coordinator system. Several speakers praised the progress made in strengthening the resident coordinator system, in particular with regard to the competency-based selection process, integrated training and increased inter-agency participation. There was general support for the recommendations contained in document DP/1999/10 on the resident coordinator system.

11. Funding. Speakers underlined the progress seen in designing a funding strategy for the organization, one that would ensure greater predictability and linkage between resources and results. Many delegations emphasized the great importance attached to meeting the funding targets set for contributions to the core. Support was expressed for the text contained in paragraph 8 of document DP/1999/10.

12. Comprehensive Development Framework. Many speakers commented on the implications of the CDF for the United Nations. Some expressed concern about how the CDF would affect the success of UNDAF, as well as how the CDF could impact on the objective of UNDAF to simplify procedures at the country level, both for Governments and country-based staffs of international organizations. The CDF was seen as distinct from UNDAF although there could be overlap in some areas. Many speakers stated that they would reserve their views on the CDF pending the outcome of discussions within the World Bank. There was support for further consultations between the United Nations and the World Bank in order to avoid duplication and ensure complementarity. Speakers underlined the need for real partnership between UNDP and the World Bank. However, the views of delegations differed with regard to the recommendation contained in paragraph 33 (d), in which collaboration was encouraged with the World Bank on the UNDAF process and the CDF. Further information was requested on how UNDAF and the CDF would relate to the country strategy note.

13. The representative of the World Bank stated that cooperation between the World Bank and UNDP was positive on both the operational and institutional levels. A standing dialogue existed with UNDP on a variety of issues of mutual concern. The World Bank was currently engaged in a dialogue with the United Nations on the CDF. He noted that the rationale, design and implementation of the CDF and UNDAF were different. The World Bank did not wish to marginalize UNDAF but rather to strengthen it.

14. Regional cooperation. Many delegations emphasized the importance of UNDP support to regional cooperation, especially through the regional economic and

social commissions. Interregional cooperation, including technical cooperation among developing countries, was also important.

15. Common premises and services. Several delegations stated that common premises should be utilized only where effective, an element recognized in the triennial policy review. More information on the possibility of increasing common services was requested by some delegations.

16. Gender balance. Many speakers expressed support for the progress of UNDP towards achieving the gender-balance targets in the organization. One delegation raised a query about why mid-level professional women had been leaving the organization in disproportionate numbers during the downsizing process.

17. Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits. Several references included in document DP/1999/10 on this subject were strongly supported by speakers, including that contained in paragraph 56 regarding concern about the lack of realization of funding expectations generated by the conferences, and that in paragraph 59 (a) concerning the need to call upon governing bodies of United Nations entities to consider devoting specific resources to horizontal follow-up. The role of UNDP in follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development was particularly important. One delegation questioned the reference in paragraph 59 linking follow-up to conferences with UNDAFs.

18. Follow-up to special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance. Delegations addressed the role of UNDAF as an instrument for creating a disaster-relief assistance framework, the importance of a comprehensive approach to humanitarian assistance with the involvement of all actors, and the creation of flexible mechanisms for crisis countries. One delegation requested that care be taken in the use of terminology that had not been accepted by intergovernmental consensus.

19. Format and design of report. While many speakers welcomed the common format of the reports of UNDP and UNFPA, some speakers suggested that one consolidated report would be more useful for discussion in the Economic and Social Council. Other delegations supported the continuation of producing two separate reports. In either case, the reporting should continue to focus on selected subjects and duplication between the two reports should be avoided as much as possible.

Response

20. The Administrator stated that it was important for the World Bank to clarify the role and intent of the CDF in relation to the concerns raised regarding the CCA/UNDAF process. He underlined the ambiguity surrounding the CDF in that there were currently many different views concerning its purpose and role. The consultation process between the United Nations and World Bank would help to clarify the issues. He noted that the CDF could create many demands on programme countries for which UNDP could provide technical cooperation. He looked forward to the further strengthening of the partnership of UNDP with the World Bank.

21. The Administrator stated that he expected the country teams to work together to provide assurances that individual programmes were carried out in cohesion with UNDAF. He noted that the regional economic commissions had participated in the development of the guidelines on UNDAF and had a clear role in the process. Monitoring and evaluation of UNDAF would be limited to an assessment of overall objectives, building on lessons learned by individual agencies. It was not envisaged that non-United Nations system partners would be brought into the UNDAF process but collaboration with those actors in support of country priorities could be enhanced through other means. The results of the evaluation of the pilot UNDAFs would be made available.

22. In response to other comments made, the Administrator noted that mid-career women had left in unexpectedly larger numbers in the latest downsizing owing to factors such as decentralization and family issues. Nevertheless, UNDP was proud of the gender-balance goals it had achieved. With regard to training activities, including those for resident coordinators, he stated that they now included greater inter-agency participation. He informed the Executive Board that more information on the disaster-relief activities of UNDP would be made available at the Economic and Social Council session.

23. The Executive Board took note of the report to the Economic and Social Council (DP/1999/10) and decided to transmit them to the Economic and Social Council with the comments made thereon.